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WOMAN:

Her Character, her Position,

AND

Her Treatment,

FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS

DOWN TO

THE PRESENT TIMES.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A

Lecture delivered before the Baltimore Addison Lyceum,

By LOUIS FITZGERALD TASISTRO.

Published by the Request of the Society.

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University Buildings, Baltimore, Dec. 12, 1849.

Dear Sir:

At a meeting of the Addison Lyceum held this evening, on motion of Mr. Geo. H. Rodgers, it was unanimously

Resolved, That the thanks of the Lyceum be tendered to L. F. Tasistro, Esq., for the appropriate and highly instructive lecture delivered before them on the evening of the 5th inst., and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

We hope the wishes of the Lyceum may meet with your approbation, conscious as we are, that your compliance will greatly oblige its members and all who may read the interesting and important truths contained in that admirable production.

With great respect, your obedient servants,

William H. Brooke, *Chairman*,
Charles W. Crocker,
Henry C. Larrabee, *Committee*.

LOUIS F. TASISTRO, Esq.,
Washington, D. C.

Washington, December 17th, 1849.

Gentlemen:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th inst., and am truly gratified that any effort of mine to impart information, however humble or unpretending, should have elicited the approbation of so intelligent a body of gentlemen as those connected with the Addison Lyceum. I shall be most happy to comply with your request as soon as I can find leisure to make such revision of my notes as may be necessary for publication.

I am, most respectfully, your ob'd't serv't,

L. FITZGERALD TASISTRO.

To Messrs. William H. Brooks,
Charles W. Crocker,
Henry C. Larrabee.

TO MRS. GENERAL MACOMB,

OF WASHINGTON CITY, D. C.

MADAM,

In dedicating this trifle to you, I am actuated solely by a desire to do homage to that exalted benevolence of character, and to those eminent private virtues which have caused your name to be honored and beloved wherever you are known and understood. Although a great portion of your life has been spent in the midst of one of the most artificial communities known in the civilized world,—a community—where the charities of social life are hourly immolated on the altar of intolerance—where the specious semblance of virtue, both in ethics and in religion, is made to conceal the prevalence of the most detestable practices, —although surrounded by elements like these, *yet* the sterling qualities of your heart have shone forth with such steady and continuous brilliancy, that those, even, who cannot appreciate your self-devotion to the best interests of society, are forced to admire the beautiful consistency of purpose and the nobility of soul which have converted the first lady of the Metropolis of the Union into an angel of charity, whereas most persons similarly situated, would simply have aspired to be recognized as leaders of fashion.

Such, madam, are the considerations which have induced me to inscribe to you, the effort you were pleased to honor with your approbation when it was first delivered in the form of a lecture before a literary society of this city.

That your days may be long and happy, is the fervent prayer of

Your respectful and devoted servant,

LOUIS FITZGERALD TASISTRO.

WASHINGTON, *July* 15, 1850.

WOMAN,

HER CHARACTER, HER POSITION, AND HER TREATMENT, FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS DOWN TO THE PRESENT TIMES.

THE various modes in which women have been treated, from the days of the Patriarchs to those of the Paladins, and from the days of the Paladins to these of the critics, is a subject of research at once curious, mournful, and amusing. Memorials of distinguished individuals afford but a fragmentary basis for speculation; but the history of the sex is the history of civilization. Lunar influences are not more immediately connected with the ebb and flow of the tide, than the rational estimate and education of women marks national progress or deterioration;—not in the arts, nor yet in manners,—but in the emancipation of the understanding from prejudice,—in the recognition of principles, and in the desire to ameliorate the human condition.

Hitherto, civilization has been estimated rather by the diffusion of luxury, than by the progress of truth;—by those works of imagination, which gild history with brilliant names, —which embellish galleries with pictures and statues, and delight the fancy with gay and gorgeous visions, rather than by those sober triumphs of reason and right feeling, which increase the comforts of many, if their trophies render few immortal. For this reason, almost all history is a work of imagination;—the events dispose themselves into striking pictures,—the leading characters fill the foreground; the painter becomes a partizan,—so does the spectator;—our sympathies are riveted on the few;—the background is in shadow, and that shadow covers the multitude.

If the quantity of national comfort were made the simple test of civilization, and not the splendor of a court, or the perfection of the arts, nearly all the history we have, must be taken to pieces;—Greece with her literary glories,—Rome with her conquests from the rising to the setting sun,—even Egypt with her temples, like the dreams of Titans, must resign a large proportion of their fame. But if the treatment of women,—another and yet closely connected test, were instituted, Egypt would

have to resign less than any other nation of antiquity,—as, with every drawback, America would have to resign less now, than any other modern nation.

The Spartan women were brutalized by the very laws; Athens, in her palmiest state of literature and the arts, condemned the female citizens to ignorance, confinement and obscurity. Cultivation was a luxury only to be obtained by the loss of character:—a courtesan might be buried amongst heroes, and have her statue placed beside those of the gods; but the virtuous wives and mothers of those heroes were kept to the distaff and the spindle. The Romans, though abundantly austere, treated women better than the more imaginative Greeks; if a less refined, they were a more rational people;—they had a higher notion of female worth,—had less petty jealousy, and nobly recognized the services of their matrons whenever rendered. In the East, however, where now women are most degraded, they were formerly treated with the most consideration. The Hebrews, as a people, were coarse and ignorant,—what Moses emphatically called them, "rebellious and stiff-necked;"—left to themselves, they would probably have treated females even worse than the brilliant Greeks

and austere Romans—it was their theocracy which lightened the feminine yoke,—gave women political consideration, by allowing them to inherit property in default of sons, and practically proved that souls are equal, by making them occasionally the recipients of the prophetic spirit, and instruments of divine government:—at the same time, we never in the Old Testament read of any miracle being wrought by the hand of a woman. It does not appear that they were kept in confinement; they were allowed to assist in the construction of the tabernacle, and of their truly feminine offering, (their brazen looking glasses,) was made the foot of the laver;—they are mentioned by name as bound to become acquainted with the book of the law, which law, when first given to the Jews, comprised not only the Jewish religion, but their literature and their history. Protecting notices of the widow and the bondwoman occur perpetually; and, in after times, whenever females, or their actions, are bound up with the Jewish chronicles, they receive just that kind of notice which is given to men and their actions;—the prophets denounce their luxury with equal severity;—the historians with equal simplicity record their virtues and their crimes; and "the sweet singer of Israel" reminds them

of their duty. Legal inferiority they certainly labored under, but the pervading spirit of Hebrew history is that of tenderness and consideration towards women, the perfection of which was afterwards developed in the same land, and by the perfection of the same religion.

In examining the condition of women during the patriarchal age, however, a difficulty presents itself which it requires no small share of skill and courage to surmount. The Patriarchs have been sometimes regarded as "the saints of the Old Testament;" and it has been represented as a kind of impiety, to subject their institutions or their actions to rigid scrutiny. This difficulty is greatly aggravated by the efforts which all Western translators have made to deprive this Oriental history of its Oriental coloring, and to narrate the events as if they were of possible occurrence in European or American society. The double error was made of investing the personages with sanctity which did not belong to them, and of bringing the action within the range of sympathies from which they were removed by time and place. It is forgotten by the advocates of these errors, that a feeling may be recommended without imparting any share of approbation to the action

by which the feeling was evidenced. The faith of Abraham may be honored by those who withhold praise from the precise instance of its exertion in the expulsion of *Hagar* and *Ishmael;* just as we praise the patriotism of the elder Brutus while we condemn the display of it in superintending the torture of his sons.

As some compensation for their misery, which the Hebrews, or "wanderers" as their name imports, suffered during their bondage in Egypt, it must be remembered that they learned the rudiments of the arts and sciences in that civilized land, and they were especially taught that first great element of all social improvement, respect for the right and the dignity of woman. In no part of the Hebrew history does woman act a more conspicuous or noble part, than in the deliverance of the nation from servitude.—When the men of Israel bowed in helplessness before Pharoah, two women spurned his edicts and refused his behests.—A father made no effort to save the infant Moses, but a mother's care hid him while concealment was possible, and a sister watched over his preservation when exposed on the river's brink. To woman was entrusted the charge of providing for the perils and the wants of the wilderness; and in the hour of triumph, woman's voice was loudest

in the acclaim of joy that ascended to heaven from an emancipated nation.

After the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, and the utter destruction of the Egyptian army, when the brightening day that succeeded to the dreadful night, spread before the weary but joyful Israelites the waterless deserts of Shur,—Moses raised that glorious canticle, supposed to be the earliest recorded poetry of the world, which, full of triumph for his miraculous passage and victory, predicted the downfall of great nations before his own,—"the sorrows of the people of Palestine,"—"the amazement of the dukes of Edom." But he sung not alone:—coeval with this first poetic outburst of holy inspiration from the lips of man, was the poetry of woman's high, exalted spirit. Miriam, the prophetess, took a cymbal in her hand, and all the women went with timbrels and with dances after her:—answering the terror-striking ode of Moses with more cheery inspirations, she roused the depressed spirits of an audience of 600,000 listeners calling on them "to sing unto the Lord for he had triumphed gloriously." Miriam was thus a leader of the female emigration of Israel, sharing in her brother's prophetic mission, and animating her people by strains as inspired as his own.

Under the theocracy of the Judges, woman's social position appears to have deteriorated.—The religion taught by Moses, and the traditions of civilization brought from Egypt, fell together. Disobedience to God was ever accompanied by treachery to man and brutality to woman. While the female character was respected, the vigor of the nation remained firm and unimpaired; but when yielding to the example of the surrounding barbarous nations, the Israelite degraded his helpmate to his slave, he purchased temporary gratification by the sacrifice of peace to himself and prosperity to his descendants.

Leaving the Jews, none of whose merits are attributable to themselves, we find the Phœnicians, Babylonians, and Carthagenians, treating their women in a superior manner, whilst the Egyptians excelled all antiquity. These were commercial nations; and it would seem that in this respect, commerce, more than conquest or the arts, humanized the feelings, and enlarged the understanding. Women were not to them mere articles of show; the Phœnicians and also the Egyptians employed them in keeping accounts, and in transacting business. Amongst these nations, women were eligible for the supreme authority: in Egypt the princes kept the

birthdays of their wives as well as their own; and in Babylon, they associated with men in festal meetings. In Christian Europe, and on our own continent, woman has received every variety of treatment—having been esteemed an angel, and drudged like an ass. Lord Byron's remark, that he would leap into a river after a woman, but not hand her out of her carriage, is on a par with the chivalric system that led knights to do battle in honor of her fair eyes, but not to make her comfortable in daily life. The times that poetry and romance have consecrated, were not really those most favorable to female happiness:—the *preux chevalier* served his mistress as the heathens of old their idols, by slashing and slaying; but he spent little time in her society, and except on grand occasions, she remained immersed in solitude. He fought for and worshipped the species; but the individual was often coarsely treated, besides being perpetually liable to the absurd charge of withcraft.

Francis the First has a right to be called the "gallant Francis," for he was the first who introduced ladies at court. The French have invariably claimed precedence in devotion to the sex;—in parlance and manner the claim may be allowed;—in the sober facts of female freedom

and consideration, they must yield to two very sober, matter-of-fact nations (commerce again) —the Americans and the English. French gallantry is even now what their loyalty was during the reign of *le grand monarque*—an affair of honor and a matter of taste. I mean no offence to this brilliant and good-natured people; nor am I speaking of education, but of the rational treatment of women in society, and of the customs and opinions concerning them. Our own fashionable system of education is radically bad; let us see what its errors chiefly consist of.

Women, like kings, are rarely spoken of impartially. Adored or stigmatised,—flattered or libelled,—despots or puppets, we have not yet settled—they have not yet settled for themselves,—what is the precise quantity of understanding they possess, and of power they should exercise. Controversy on these points ran high towards the close of the last century. Some of the disputants brought the subject to be considered a dangerous one, and, as if by general consent, it has since lain in abeyance. A casual essay in a periodical has sometimes broken the silence, but nothing more;—there has been a long truce between claim and dispute;—it has been the fashion for women to write books,

the fashion for men to praise them, and the old question, of equal or not equal, has been amicably waived. Latterly, however, there have been a few notable signs, significant of a change, and as a quaint critic observes, chapters, dissertations, and even satires, on the subject of female mind, its capacity, its limits, and its proper line of exertion, have "rained more or less heavy." Strange to say, the relative merits of the understanding of the sexes, was a favorite controversy soon after the revival of letters; and the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw, on behalf of women, the gallantry of chivalry carried into literature. Boccacio was the first who set the example, by writing a Latin work in honor of illustrious women; after him, more than twenty writers published eulogies on the sex. One would have thought these writings alone must have exhausted the quarry, but *Peter Paul Ribera*, an Italian, undismayed by such bulky effusions, published, in that captivating language, a work entitled, "The Immortal Triumphs and Heroic Enterprises of eight hundred and forty-five Women!" —and, independent of these large volumes, many writers addressed short panegyrics to particular ladies;—men of genius attached themselves to celebrated women, and at a

later period, *Descartes*, admired by two princesses, boasted of the philosophic character of women. Among these panegyrics, one of the most singular was published at Venice in 1555, styled "*The Temple of the Divine Signora Jeanne d'Arragon, constructed to her honor by all the greatest wits, and in all the principal languages, of the world.*" The academy voting this homage, once entertained the notion of associating the signora's sister in the honor; but after grave deliberation, it was decided that the ladies might prefer separate shrines, and the "Temple" was erected to Jeanne d'Arragon alone. The most correct name for this literary monument, would have been the tower of Babel; for the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldean, Italian, French, Spanish, Slavonic, Polonese, and Hungarian tongues, were employed in its construction. It might have seemed that literary gallantry "could no further go;" but grave and reverend signors, (there were beards and black caps then,) having claimed for women equality with men, others came forward to claim for them superiority! The leading knight in this new tourney, was the celebrated *Cornelius Agrippa*, theologian, soldier, physician, astrologer, alchemist, courtier and vagabond. In 1569, he pub-

lished a treatise "on the superior excellence of women over men," and supported his arguments by proofs, theological, physical, historical, cabalistical and moral. *Ruscelli*, a Venetian, followed on the same side, and out-*Agrippa-d Agrippa;* he mixed up Platonism and theology,—put Moses by the side of Petrarch, and cited in the same breath Homer and St. John:—his book was a fantastic mixture of love, religion, philosophy, and paganism.—Notwithstanding all these ponderous volumes, there yet remained some incredulous people;—bachelors and husbands, who very naturally demurred to such large draughts on their humility—sixteenth-century-men, whom even folios could not vanquish; and new books on the old theme continued to be produced for their conversion, in Italian, Spanish, and French. John Bull seems to have been John Bull even then, for we meet with no English work on the subject. The women, too, not satisfied with having been so lauded by men, began to laud themselves, and one of the sisterhood published a volume in Paris, with a title, which I have copied on account of its singular modesty:—"The generous woman; who shows that her sex is more noble, more polite, more

learned, more valiant, more virtuous, and more economical, than the male sex!"

Venerable cobwebs these, and spun by venerable spiders, yet not to be despised, as illustrating the fact, that female cultivation will always accord with the masculine taste predominant for the time being. When the men were chivalric savages, spending their time in feasting, fasting and praying, the women were Amazonian in their pursuits,—embroidering scarfs to be worn in battle—in the amusements of peace, stimulating the love of war, and not unfrequently acting as warriors themselves. When letters revived, and learning came into fashion amongst men, learning was cultivated by women. When political party spirit has split men into factions, women have scarcely been behind-hand,—presenting petitions and patching their faces in behalf of a favorite cause,—witness the times of Charles I and of Queen Anne.

Re-asserting that female cultivation will always accord with the predominant masculine taste, the existing era cannot be passed without remark. What are the intellectual possessions now most in vogue, most marketable, and soonest recognized?—General knowledge —versatility—and both in writing and in con-

versation—"the gift of utterance." What most strikingly characterizes our literature?—Universal inquiry, and universal readiness at meeting inquiry;—or to venture description by an epithet, and that a coined one,—our literature is encyclopœdic—a brief description of all things—a colloquial commentary, on whatsoever is, has been, or is to come. To this, female cultivation affords a precise parallel, for never were our women so accomplished. I do not limit this term to music, dancing, or drawing:—by the term accomplished I mean, that peculiar mental elegance which is the real or supposed result of much tuition, some travel, and great intercourse with society. Accomplishment is the intellectual shadow of an intellectual substance; it is not attainments, not science, not even knowledge in its simple form, but the combined phantasm of all;—it is less a cultivation of the understanding than a preparation for society,—a fashioner of deportment, and a teacher of conversation. Accomplishments are the manners of the mind; and were a census taken of all the educated women under thirty, the result would justify my calling the present *the era of accomplished women*, as distinguished from all other eras, and all the women of other eras. Beyond this, I

am not prepared to admit. Yet a cry is heard in some quarters that females are now over-educated, and over-education as it is termed, bears the blame of all feminine delinquencies: —over-education answers to the French revolution, inasmuch as it can be made a *grand mot d'enigme.*—Now so far from joining in this cry, I must take the liberty of saying, that women are not educated half enough. Over-accomplished they may be; but the boasted *education* they now receive, is meagre and contemptible, if the intent of education be a perfect development of mind and character, in accordance with the native bias of both;—if every female being ought to consider the SPIRIT within her in the light of a kingdom she is to rule over,—a domain she is to cultivate,—a trust of which she is to give account;—if the educator and the educated ought to consider themselves fellow-workers in the great business of becoming wise in order to be useful. Where there is mind, no such thing is possible as over-education, in the high meaning of the term. What we really labor under in practice, is the prevalence of inappropriate education,—one that has no reference to difference of intellect or station. What we labor under in theory, is the prevalence of mean or inflated notions rel-

ative to the nature of education,—its power, effects and instruments; and, as subordination is the complexion of female life, women suffer most, alike from the practice and the theory. The worth of all instruction which can be bought and sold,—which books and professors can impart, is exaggerated;—that instruction which would nurture the faculties and encourage them to act vigorously for themselves, is feared and disliked. There is Mahomedanism in our system;—memory answers to the Koran, —manner to the Prophet,—and society to Mecca:—these are sanctioned, cultivated and worshipped; but of anything beyond this, there is intolerance. Of what is styled over-education, how much has reference to aught beyond making the pupil pleasing and prosperous? in what is called our excessive cultivation, of what is the portion of *mind* really cultivated? Among highly finished young women, who have spent eight or nine years as the recipients of tuition, how many shall we find who have thought out for themselves a single thought, or have any notion of the value of knowledge beyond the mere credit of possessing it? How many are acquainted with the responsibility involved by the possession of an understanding—be it great or be it small. There is, I repeat Mahomedan-

ism in our system, and faithful answers to these queries would prove it;—a faithful answer would prove that we cultivate our women to the highest pitch that can make them fascinating, with a careful abstinence from that which would make them wise. We overlay the idol with gold, but should grieve if a Prometheus gave it life. We deprive the lark of sight in order that it may sing us sweeter songs;—we render the captive weak, and demand him to be strong as the free;—we stimulate his feelings to madness, and expect from him the exercise of reason;—we spread our treasures before him, and mock if he ask to share them; we deprive him of liberty and bid him rejoice in his prison. This may be a metaphorical way of putting the case, but is it very far from the truth? Is the painted, gilded, varnished thing, which we call education, and which some call over-education, worth presenting to the minds and hearts of a race of beings as influential as women?—and remembering the conventional morality, in which, for the most part, a female is reared,—the veil that is kept between herself and the knowledge of her true position in society,—the little truth that she hears whilst hearing it might avail her,—the enervating treatment she habitually re-

ceive, even from the nursery, till at least half-way towards the grave,—remembering this and much more, are we justified in attributing her faults and follies primarily to herself.

There are many to divide the blame amongst; I shall begin with the poets and novelists, who, like the enchanters of olden times, can effect more mischief, in a few minutes, than may be undone with long and weary toil. Women, and the influence of women, have been to them such fertile themes, that, if all their descriptions were fairly copied out, we might cover the world with them:—the globe would be an entire sheet of foolscap,—the real "Ladies' Magazine." But amidst all the bevies of angels they have drawn, how passing few of them have been rational creatures!—their heroines have mainly become such personifications of tears, love, death, poetry, and helplessness, that an honest man, linked to such in real life, would surely be at his wits' ends, before the end of the honey-moon. They have mainly erected a standard of feminine excellence, and their motto has been,—"*La vertu—c'est le devouement.*"—As false and fatal a one as may well be found. Yet, in various applications of this sentiment, consists the ethics of imagination. Therein, the two great duties of womanhood are, being

beautiful, and being devoted;—the two great occupations,—loving and dying;—and the exceeding great reward consists, in every self-willed exhibition of impassioned feeling, being made a decoy for sympathy and admiration. Examine the whole range of imaginative literature, and, considering its matchless sway over human sensibility, and the matchless power and beauty of mind employed in its construction, has it done, or has it failed in, its duty? has it thrown its influence into the scale of sacred right, or of pleasing wrong?—has it seduced or strengthened?—has it done justice to,—has it benefited WOMEN? I believe not. They have received from poetry and fiction, lip homage and knee reverence, adulation, incense, every concomitant of idol-worship, with *only* the absence of fervent rational respect. The process of degradation has taken the semblance of adoration:—compliment to their love has veiled contempt of their understanding:—for one female portrait that society would be benefited by its having life, how many hundreds have we, who would only be less intensely,—etherially useless, than the ghost of a rose, or the phantom of a lily. Earth is too gross for these essences of womanhood. This is only one point in which poetry and fiction may be

arraigned on behalf of the female character;—over against the land of sentiment lies the kingdom of heartlessness,—and the topographers of this kingdom—otherwise fashionable novelists—have assuredly done *their* best to erect a low standard of womanly excellence. The bowl-and-dagger-and-wrapping-gown ladies were bad enough, but all good angels keep us from the nether mill-stones of quality!

Such being the false position of women, why do we censure them for being coquettes, when the indiscriminate flattery of every man teaches them, that the homage of one is as good as that of another? It is the same darts, the same flames, the same beaux, the same coxcombs. The man of sense, when he attempts to compliment, recommends the arts of the beau, since he condescends to do with awkardness what a monkey can do with grace. How can a woman prefer where there is no merit, or be constant when there is no superiority? With all she is a goddess, and to her all men are equally mortals. Is she capricious? Can she be otherwise when she hears that the universe must be proud to wait her commands;—that the utmost of a lover's hopes is to be the humblest of her slaves;—that to fulfil the least of

her commands, is the highest ambition of her adorers.

Is it surprising that a pretty woman should be vain, when we daily praise to her face, her charms, her taste, and her wit? Can we blame her vanity when we tell her, that nothing can resist her attractions;—that there is nothing so barbarous which she cannot subdue;—when we tell her, that her eyes are brighter than day—that her form is fairer than summer—more refreshing than spring;—that her lips are vermillion;—that her skin combines the whiteness of the lily with the incarnation of the rose?

Do we censure a fine woman as frivolous, when we unceasingly tell her that no other study becomes her but that of varying her pleasures;—that she requires no talent but for the arrangement of new parties; no ideas beyond the thought of the afternoon's amusement? Can we blame her frivolity when we tell her, that her hands were not made to touch the needle, or to soil their whiteness in domestic employment? Can we blame her frivolity when we tell her, that the look of seriousness chases from her face the dimple, in which the loves and graces wanton;—that reflection clouds her brow with care, and that she who

thinks, sacrifices the smile that makes beauty charm, and the gaiety that renders wit attractive?

How can a pretty woman fail to be ignorant, when the first lesson she is taught is, that beauty supersedes and dispenses with every other quality;—that all she needs to know is, that she is pretty; that to be intelligent is to be pedantic, and to be more learned than one's neighbor, is to incur the reproach of absurdity and affectation.

The next on the list of those who have troubled the waters of education generally, but of woman in particular, are the systematizers—teachers and writers, who think that nothing is to be learned except out of a "prent buik"—who take the universe of knowledge and cut it into little stars—stitch the elements into catechisms,—teach nothing old but on new principles (as if principles were ever new)—intellectual Pucks, who will put a girdle around any science "in forty minutes"—or pages;—systematizers, who make love to unsuspecting fathers and mothers, causing them to believe, that mind, like mahogany, may be carved into anything, and that mahogany, like mind, will very soon inlay itself with brass inventors of teaching—schemes,

"Cold as their hearts, and barren as their brains"—marrers of the health of the early, and therefore most sacred happiness of girlhood,—removing it from the hands of those teachers of God's own appointing, for the first years of existence,—fresh air,—natural play—buoyant spirits and affections,—fields, flowers, bible stories, and the mother's knee.

To give amusements a learned air,—to besiege with information the senses of mere babes,—and stiffen with premature accomplishments, minds and bodies "yet in the gristle," is the boasted result of this curious machinery of tuition. Well may there be a superabundance of crooked spines, pale faces, and precocious performances, almost rivalling dancing dogs and piping bullfinches.

There remains yet a third party in this question, on whom blame must fall—the race of ambitious parents; who, not sordid, but infatuated worshippers of talent, would, at every risk, have their children clever, or at least reputed to be so;—who expend cheerfully on a daughter's schooling what would formerly have sufficed for her dower. The commencement of a simpler, and yet far deeper style of instruction lies with them; it is *their* money, *their* anxiety, *their* expectations, that call forth pro-

mises and professors of wonders;—*they* are the real authors of the systems, theories and treatises, that

"Darken counsel by words without knowledge;"—

they really keep those splendid establishments where mind and manner are forced as in a hot-bed;—*they* require, *they* remunerate, and with *them* it lies to regenerate.

I have said that the present is *par excellence* the era of accomplished women; herein, ambitious parents have their reward, but it is one, that might not perhaps satisfy them, did they recognize the fact, that with all the modern means of facilitating study,—with the triple aid of books, time, and fashion, we have no females so remarkable for their attainments as some who graced an earlier and a darker period! To name but a few proofs. The young creature who was queen only to mount a scaffold, solaced some of her last hours with Plato in Greek:—the three Seymours, nieces to a queen and daughters to a regent, were all celebrated for their science and for Latin verses, which were translated all over Europe;—the daughter of Lord Chancellor More translated from the Greek the ecclesiastical history of Eusebius;—the three daughters of Sir Anthony Coke, (one of whom was governess to Edward

VI,) were all celebrated for their learning;—the beautiful Mary Stuart wrote and spoke six languages;—Aloysia Sigéa of Toledo, besides Latin and Greek, understood Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac, and wrote in each of these languages a letter to Pope Paul the Third;—Isabella *de Cordaud*, was mistress of Latin, Greek and Hebrew;—Cassandra Fidele wrote well in the three languages of Homer, Virgil and Dante, and frequently gave public lessons in Padua;—*Madame Seturnan* seems to have been a female Crichton, since, independent of other acquirements, she spoke nine different languages. But it is neither interesting nor needful to accumulate all the names of those females, who in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries assisted in controversies, harangued in Latin, wrote Greek, studied Hebrew, gave lectures in philosophy and even theology. The question is not one of taste, but of facts;—we may prefer, if we choose, the female mind in a state of greater femininess, but such preference has nothing to do with the quantity of real and unusual attainment possessed by women less preferred. In adverting to these facts, I wish it to be distinctly understood, that I have no desire to see the revival of lady doctors—and if I did, it would not be possible.

That which we now call society, was then much less known;—habits of life were more simple;—fashion had not established her multitudinous and frivolous claims on time, and the love of scandal, therefore, which, in Washington especially, pervades every circle, and characterizes every conversation, was less an absorbing passion than it is now. Literature was not an adjunct to luxury,—it was a luxury in itself. I should regret to see a pedantic system supersede even the accomplishing one, but when a girl manifests real intellect, why should the intervention of prejudice prevent her studies, conducted privately as they may,—being in some degree sound, masculine, invigorating, and comprehensive, Why, as in a famine, is *she* to pay dearly for inferior food? Why is *she* to give her "fourscore pieces of silver for an ass' head?"

An early intercourse with those works which prove their authors to have been "only a little lower than the angels"—with those grave and lofty thinkers who flood the understanding with light without heating the sensibility,—who love the beautiful, the holy and the true,—the great writers of and for all ages, "to whom, as to the mountains and the stars, the soul feels pensive and submiss,"—this, more than any

thing besides, would render mind, what to woman it too often is not, a source of tranquil enjoyment.

I have frequently been struck with the fact, that women and the working classes are, as regards cultivation, similarly circumstanced. Few now dispute their right to knowledge; but the best mode of presenting them with it, and the best mode of rendering the gift beneficial, remains yet an unsolved problem. The recognition of the principle, that it is the privilege of *all* to ask for knowledge, and the duty of *all* to "give to every one that asketh," and that the only limit to the gaining and the diffusion of knowledge, is not that assigned by man —*circumstance;* but that marked out by Providence—*capacity;*—the recognition of this principle, and this duty, forms an era in moral history, analogous to those discoveries in science, which have subjected the elements to its sway. As yet, however, neither has advanced much beyond a state of infancy; and to mature either into perfection, is probably reserved for the men and years of another generation.

The great misfortune that lies in the path of highly cultivated women, is the absence of active occupation for their mental energy, which, when combined with ambition, as it too gener-

ally is, lays waste and consumes them. Men have professional offices;—to them belong, of right and courtesy, all the activities and authorities of life. Authorship is the only accredited vent for a woman's intellect; and this, by obviating one evil, induces many others. The fever of unoccupied energy is quenched; but, bye and bye, the worse fever of sensitive ambition, or ungratified longing after sympathy, arises, and her position in society becomes yet more false.—Where must the cure be sought? In an inconceivably higher education of what may be called the sense of responsibility. Where genius indisputably exists in a girl, there let parents and instructors frankly acknowledge its existence; and on that admission ground a serious but simple inculcation of these doctrines:—that to possess intellect is, in the first instance, an accident, not a merit;—that it is by no means a novelty;—that like rank and wealth, it involves the most serious cares and duties;—and that even superior knowledge is worthless without active virtue. Parents and instructors must learn to regard as nothing short of *sin*, all efforts to stimulate a girl's mind, for the gratification either of their vanity or her's. It is treating genius as the Jews did their false Messiahs, going out after it, with an

adulating cry of "lo here, and lo there!" It is making mind subservient to notoriety, instead of use and happiness; it is dissevering attainments from the moral application of them which so often makes genius, mind, and attainments to woman, a snare, an anxiety, and a reproach. Another remedy might be found, in equally high views of the influence of woman being early addressed to the heart and understanding of gifted girls, still based on the doctrine of responsibility. Show her that it is not in the quantity of talent or influence, but in the faithful appropriation of each, that merit consists; and that the moment she is satisfied to use either for mere personal advantage, she has taken a step towards becoming weak and contemptible.

The constant cry of all young imaginative minds, is,

What shall I do to be forever known?

But her next is, if a female,—"there is nothing for women to do." She feels in the position of *Esau*:—man has taken the birthright; and she fancies that for her no blessing is left. Those who would comfort the grieving enthusiast by pointing out literary fame, would act neither wisely nor kindly;—few of the many

who feel that yearning, are equal to the attainment of that fame;—and could nothing else be objected to the remedy, it involves no general principle. The fair answer is, to unfold to the complainant the records of biography;—to show her the grand fact, that in most of the triumphs achieved by men, whether in arts, literature, morals, or religion, she has shared, and in the purest form, by having been their instructor, instigator or friend. Separate and individual triumphs are the lot of few women, and those few are rarely happier for them;—but collateral triumphs she may have without number. How few have been the distinguished men, who have not acknowledged that their deepest obligations have, at some time or other, been to a wife, a sister, or, above all, a mother! Let the mind of every girl,—especially of every girl of talent, be sedulously directed to this cheering view of female influence,—to the beautiful and refreshing under-current which it may furnish in the troubled course of daily life.

Women are accused of being inimical to enlarged views and principles:—how should it be otherwise, unless early led to look beyond petty and individual interests?—unless early led to discover the glory of a life set apart to, and

consecrated by DUTY?—unless she be early convinced, that a passion for self-aggrandizement deteriorates mind, and alloys amiability? Perhaps, after all, the problem most difficult of solution, is, how to make heart and mind co-operate tranquilly,—imagination and will harmonize;—how to manage female intellect in connection with female sensibility. It is, perhaps, impossible that this result should ever be attained without much preparatory suffering; but surely the period of such suffering might be abridged. The highest, and yet the simplest mode of education, consists in teaching mind to manage itself—to understand and make efficient use of its peculiar endowments,—to profit by its own mistakes,—and to bring into practical exercise what, in theory, it admires and loves. The melancholy, the romance, the ardor, if not untractableness, that more or less mark every gifted girl, arises mainly from unoccupied energy;—provide that energy with suitable employment,—treat its possessor with tenderness, and, by degrees, what seemed strange and troublesome will pass away. An English lady of considerable celebrity, the famous Mrs. Hutchinson, has left a curious picture of her childhood, which may be quoted in proof. "Play among other children" (I give

her own words) "I despised; and when I was forced to entertain such as came to visit me, I tired them with more grave instruction than their mothers, and plucked all their babies to pieces, and kept the children in such awe, that they were glad when I entertained myself with older company, to whom I was very acceptable; and being in the house with many that had a great deal of wit, and very profitable serious discourse being frequent at my father's table, and in my mother's drawing room, I was very attentive to all, and gathered up many things that I would repeat again, to the great admiration of many who took my memory for invention and wit."

Now this is by no means an attractive picture; yet it is well known, that this identical child afterwards matured into a matron and a heroine of the purest and stateliest kind—

> A perfect woman, nobly planned,
> To warn, to comfort, and command.

Her parents wisely discerned the folly of seeking to feed such a mind on accomplishments and imaginations;—it asked for "strong meat," which was not withheld. With her brothers, she was initiated in all grave, sound, masculine knowledge; and what was even better still, in

the uses of it. She did not make the less affectionate wife or mother for the costly garniture bestowed upon her intellect; and those who remember how, by the exercise of that intellect, she stood between her husband and death, will frankly own that she made the better friend.

The old political axiom of Europe, of maintaining a balance of power amongst various States, might with advantage be adopted in female cultivation. Woman, as woman, is generally sure to abound in feeling;—gifted woman is nearly sure to abound in its excess;—hence, she stands less in need of stimulants than sedatives—of the spur less than the rein;—yet if sedative and spur are harshly inflicted, instead of a regulated mind, we may have a broken spirit. The natural remedy is, to cultivate the imagination by means of the understanding;—the feelings in connection with the faculties;—the heart through the medium of the head. As a general hint, there was much wisdom in the advice given by an old mother to a young one:—"Stimulate the sensibility of your boys and blunt that of your girls." There is nothing harsh in this last clause but the sound:—the process may be effected with all grace and gentleness,—by endeavoring to brace the nerves

even, when the heart is moved;—by encouraging reason to sit as judge over sympathies and impulses;—by showing that imagination and her conceptions,—fancy and her fairy work, must, if good for anything, approve themselves at the bar of the understanding. Poetry and fiction devoured for amusement enervate the mind;—poetry and fiction considered as subjects for study, and taken in connection with high reading of other kinds, will have a sobering effect even upon the most imaginative and romantic. It is not thinking that unrealizes the mind, but musing and dreaming. Probably those who live least under the influence of imagination, are practised poets and novelists, and this, from the habit of submitting their inventions to the test of judgment and experience.

Before closing my remarks, I must advert for a moment to a class of females, who, as nearly as possible, seem to have all the good of cultivation and none of the evil. They may be called the enjoyers of literature, in opposition to the producers;—the world never hears their names, and yet they may be clever and influential within their private sphere. Wanting genius and free from ambition, they are interested in the minds both above and beneath them;—their happiness is their chief concern;—litera-

ture is the garnish of their lives, not its food;—they value knowledge, but they never dream of celebrity. Every one acquainted with Madam Roland's "Impartial Appeal," knows her touching remark, of which the mention of these women has reminded me.

"The study of the fine arts," observes that lady, "considered as part of the education of a young woman, ought, in my opinion, to be less directed to the acquisition of distinguished talents than to the inspiring them with a love of employment;—to the making them contract a habit of application,—to the multiplying their means of amusement; for it is thus we escape from the *ennui* which is the most cruel disease of man in society. Oh! what an injury did those do me who took it upon them to withdraw the veil under which I loved to remain concealed. If those who knew me had judged properly in regard to facts, they would have prevented me from suffering a sort of celebrity which I never envied:—instead of now spending my time in refuting falsehood, I should read a chapter in Montaigne, paint a flower, or play an ariette, and thus beguile the solitude of my prison without sitting down to write my confessions."

It is certainly of the utmost importance that the education of women should be strictly feminine; yet this affects more the manner than the matter of instruction; for it is not so much *what* is taught, as the *way* in which it is taught, and the use made of it, that determines character.—Knowledge, in itself, has no tendency to make a woman unfeminine; any more than it has to make a man proud; but it is the self-sufficiency which is sometimes instilled as its accompaniment that produces assumption and conceit in the one case, and arrogance in the other.—Perfect acquirement demands time and application;—and it has this good effect, that while it satisfies and fixes the mind, it does not cheat it into a false estimate of its own powers. On the contrary, superficial knowledge dazzles by the rapidity of its attainment; and while it impresses us with a notion of our own superiority, leads us to despise those who have travelled by slower steps.

It is indeed no wonder that young women should be so very clever now-a-days. There are so many helps to learning, and such infinite variety of steps to Parnassus. There are so many pioneers to level the way, that it is almost a libel any longer to call it steep and rugged. If grammar be dry and abstruse, its

necessity is superseded;—if the dictionary be irksome, there is the interlined translation;—if the classic author be obscure and ponderous, there is the lucid paraphrase, and the elegant abridgment. Be the nut ever so hard, the kernel is extracted. Our very babies may suck the sweets of Froissart, Robertson and Hume, and follow with infantile curiosity the retreat of Napoleon's armies from Moscow!—in this absurd simplification of knowledge, mechanics are also made to bear a conspicuous part; and could the modern school-room be preserved like the saloons of Pompeii, it might pass in succeeding generations for a tolerably refined inquisition.—There would be found stocks for the fingers, and pulleys for the neck, and weights and engines of suspicious form and questionable purposes; and in spite of all our boasts of philanthropy, we might pass in future ages for the inventors of very ingenious tortures.

But for what end is all this apparatus? It is certainly very plausible that knowledge should be simplified;—that the child of the nineteenth century should profit by its illumination, and that young ladies, instead of poring out their eyes over embroidered frames, should be treated as moral and intelligent beings. But where there is such excess of feeding, is it

possible that there can be digestion?—Where there is so much anxiety to impart brilliancy, is it not for display rather than for use?—it is not to glitter in a sunbeam, and display a ceaseless variety of gay and gaudy colors, that woman should be educated, but to occupy her station with grace and fulfil its duties with dignity. What a woman knows is comparatively of little importance to what a woman *is*. Let her mind be enlarged and her information accurate!—Instead of sipping like a butterfly at every flower, let her excel, if possible, in some particular department of knowledge, and it is of very little consequence how limited may be the number of her accomplishments. A female character formed on this principle, "is as the morning light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—The sense, the spirit, the sweetness, are immortal.—All besides "withers like the grass." The power of mere accomplishments, like that of a pretty face, is diminished every time it is brought into play. When vulgar passions do not predominate, and vulgar passions cannot predominate always—the soul will seek a soul;—it will refuse to be satisfied with any thing less.—If it find none, in vain shall the brightest eye sparkle;—in vain shall the softest smile entice! But if a mind ap-

pears, and, wherever it resides, a mind will appear, it is recognized, admired and embraced; —even though the eye should possess no lustre, and smiles should at the moment be banished by sorrow.

"Mind, mind alone, bear witness earth and heaven,
The living fountain in itself contains
Of beauteous and sublime! Here hand in hand
Sit paramount the graces."

I have already observed in connection with this subject, that, to cultivate the imagination by means of the understanding, is the best and surest mode of checking those romantic aspirations, which all women capable of strong feeling, are sure to indulge in.—Imagination has been described as the waving of the wings through which the soul seeks to feel the varied forms of the ideal by passing motion. To speak more metaphysically still, I would say, that it is the power which is employed in taking a temporary hold of the finite ideal, and turning the mind by the transient conception of what is not within its own being. Imagination exists more or less in all human beings:—cultivation alone can call its dormant energies into play.—He, for instance, can know little of nature's loveliness who but casts a careless glance around, as he hurries along the beaten path;—

he only appreciates who pauses to mark the variable light and shadow;—who sees the wild flower in the grass under his feet:—who listens to the song of the wind among the leaves—and who links with the objects around, some charm of association or of sentiment. As the mind of woman is most easily touched with whatever is affecting in the chances of life, and tastes with keener relish, whatever is picturesque and beautiful in the objects of nature, so should those faculties which she is most likely to exercise in her communion with the world be subjected to the most rigid, most exalted, and most refined test of cultivation. Let this be done, and the insipid laws of fashion would soon cease to exercise, as they do now, a blasting influence over the happiness of social and domestic life. Let it be borne in mind, above all, that the character of the male sex depends very much upon the moral elevation or depression of the fairer portion of the human family. The nearer the latter approach perfection, the more virtuous the former are certain to become. Wherever virtue, innocence, and purity, characterize the latter, the former are distinguished for the most exalted bravery,—the purest patriotism, and the most untainted integrity.—When the latter are vain, forward, and affected, the

former are sure to pay more attention to exterior appearance than to the cultivation of the understanding;—they generally degenerate from men into fops, and are better calculated to act as masters of ceremonies in ball-rooms, than to benefit mankind by their abilities, or to contribute to the happiness of domestic life by their virtues.

If the power which women possess, and the influence which they exercise over men, be great, how *deeply* are they answerable to the world for the imperfect use which they make of the means in their hands for the improvement of man! How little have they yet done to accomplish the great end,—the perfection of the species!—Why array the artillery of their charms on the side of folly, in its contest with reason?—Why abandon that dignity which is based upon the refinement of intellect, and the purity of virtuous innocence, and adopt that spurious kind, which consists only in a strict adherence to forms which have no meaning,—to shadows which have no substance,—which fashion dignifies by the appellation of *etiquette*? There is an elemental principle of divinity with us all, always straining at perfection;—why not, then, instead of debasing that principle, endeavor to assist it in reaching that goal

which it was destined to attain? Why not discountenance well-dressed vice and embroidered foppery? Why not respect and encourage honest virtue, unadorned by the splendor of wealth and the gilding of fashion? Why not assist and stimulate merit in its struggles for success against the weight of poverty, which drags it to the ground? Acting thus, women would indeed be the good genii of the human race. Improved and elevated themselves, they would soon induce man to follow them along the same road;—for whether for good or for evil,—whether in the pursuit of reason or of folly,—who can refuse to follow them? Both benefited and improved, they would contribute to each other's mutual happiness;—for their interests are based upon the same foundation, and their happiness must spring from the same source. Vanity and folly, forced to give up the contest, would finally disappear from the earth, or conceal themselves in the privacy of darkness. Then indeed we might hope to approach somewhat nearer to that intellectual and political perfection, which at present is said to be found only in the land of Eutopia! Wealth would be valued only so far as it contributed to the real happiness of the individual, and the general benefit of the community. Man, con-

scious of how much he owed to woman, to the admiration of personal beauty, would add the profoundest respect for the spirit within, and sincere gratitude for the benefits derived: — while woman, though she might cease to be a star abroad, would be a perfect angel at home!

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